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Farmers Protest against Deteriorating Situation in Agriculture.

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Approved By:

Russ Nicely, Agricultural Attaché

Prepared By:

Piotr Rucinski, Agricultural Specialist

Report Highlights:

Polish farmers protest against deteriorating economic situation in agriculture in order to force the government to intervene on the swine and milk markets and pay for crop damage made by wild boars. Road blockages and protests in front of the Ministry of Agriculture and the office of the Prime Minister are organized by two farmer's union organizations in response to decreasing agricultural prices and fear of termination of milk quota system in March 2015.

General Information:

Two agricultural organizations, Union of Farmers "Solidarity" and All-Poland Alliance of Farmer's Unions and Farm Organizations (OPZZ), organized on Thursday, February 19th, a protest in a form of a "green village" built in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Warsaw. Slawomir Izdebski, the President of OPZZ, announced that the protest of farmers in front of the Prime Minister's Office started at midday on February 19th and it will end only when the agreement between the farmers and the government is signed or agriculture minister Marek Sawicki has resigned or is dismissed. The main demands of farmers include compensation for crop damages caused by wild boars, reimbursement of all milk quotas purchased by farmers, export subsidies for pork, governmental purchases of agricultural products for intervention stocks, and a ban on imports of grain from Ukraine and sale of land to foreigners.

The protest in front of the Prime Minister's Office is a continuation of farmer protests held February 11th, when hundreds of farmers descended on the Polish capital in their tractors and blocked many of the major arteries leading in and out of the city. The blockage of roads on February 11th and a protest in front of the building of the Ministry of Agriculture were made in support of the position of farmer organizations which met the same day with Minister Sawicki in the Ministry of Agriculture. Slawomir Izdebski, the head of the All-Poland Alliance of Farmer's Unions and Farm organizations (OPZZ), left the meeting in the ministry after 45 minutes saying: "We will not talk with these traitors, as there is nothing to discuss". He also mentioned to the press that other farmer organizations which stayed at the meeting with the Minister are heavily dependent on government financing and they do not truly represent interest of the Polish farmers. After the meeting the Minister of Agriculture announced that most of the issues requested by farmers are already resolved or close to being resolved. He mentioned that he meets on a regular basis with the representatives of all farmer's unions and agricultural organizations to discuss agricultural policy issues. He also mentioned that OPZZ is just one of many farmer organizations in Poland.

Although the Minister of Agriculture is trying to diminish the role of the protests and present the leader of OPZZ as only a representative of a small group of farmers, it is important to note that the economic situation of Polish farmers deteriorated in 2014 when compared to the previous year. According to the Eurostat data in 2014 income of Polish farmers decreased by 5.7 percent in comparison to the previous year, while on the average income of farmers in the EU28 declined by 1.7 percent. In 2014, Polish farmers suffered from reduced prices of agricultural products resulting from the introduction of a ban on imports of agricultural products by Russia, a drop in pork prices because of the outbreak of African Swine Fever, a decline in beef prices stemming from the introduction of a ban on ritual slaughter, and finally, a decrease of grain prices caused by a large crop. In addition, Polish dairy producers have to pay the European Union Euro 46 million (US\$ 60 million) as a fine for production over the milk quota in 2013/2014 quota year.

Comment: 2015 is an election year in Poland for the President and Parliament. As a result different groups of the society try to put pressure on the government and politicians to meet their demands. Protests of Polish farmers follow the recent successful protests and strikes by coal miners, which ended with concessions given by the government to the miners and dismissal of the president of the largest Polish coal mine consortium.

